



**CIRCULATING COUNTYWIDE
NOMINATING AND QUALIFYING PETITION FORMS**

Michigan Department of State
Bureau of Elections
June 2003

www.Michigan.gov/sos

CIRCULATING COUNTYWIDE PETITION FORMS

The following is a summary of the laws, court rulings and Attorney General opinions which govern the validity of signatures on countywide nominating and qualifying petition forms.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- A signature is acceptable if it includes the name of the city or township where the signer is registered to vote; a mark to indicate whether the place of registration is a “city” or a “township”; the name of the signer (cursive and printed); the signer’s street address or rural route number; the signer’s Zip Code; and a proper date.
- Each signer must affix his or her signature to a petition sheet which bears -- in the heading of the sheet -- the name of the county in which the signer is registered to vote. The heading of the petition sheet may not list more than one county.
- A signature is invalid if the signer is (1) not registered to vote in Michigan or (2) registered to vote in the state but not in the city or township listed or (3) registered to vote in the city or township listed but the city or township is not within the county listed in the heading of the petition sheet.
- Certain irregularities are accepted. For further information, see “Acceptable Sheet Irregularities” and “Acceptable Signature Irregularities” below.

PETITION SHEET VALIDITY

HEADING

A petition sheet is invalid if it contains one or more of the following irregularities in the heading of the sheet:

- County where circulated not listed or more than one county of circulation listed – and it is not apparent from cities and townships listed by signers that circulation was within a single county.
- Required information concerning candidate or office sought omitted.

CIRCULATOR’S CERTIFICATE

A petition sheet is invalid if it contains one or more of the following irregularities in the circulator’s certificate:

- Not signed by circulator.
- Signed by more than one circulator.

- Not dated or incompletely dated.
- Dated before all signature dates.
- City or township of registration not listed.
- No street address or rural route number listed.

ACCEPTABLE SHEET IRREGULARITIES

The following irregularities do not affect the validity of petition sheets:

- County where circulated not listed or more than one county of circulation listed – and it is apparent from cities and townships listed by signers that circulation was within a single county.
- Illegible circulator signature.
- Any of the following: circulator prints name in entry provided for signature; circulator fails to print name in entry provided for printed name; circulator enters his or her cursive signature in entry provided for printed name. (Note: a circulator's signature is not acceptable if circulator prints name in entry provided for printed name and fails to enter his or her signature in the signature entry.)
- Circulator fails to enter his or her Zip Code or enters an incorrect Zip Code.
- Circulator lists village or “unincorporated place” instead of township of registration when village or “unincorporated place” is contained within a single township.

PETITION SIGNATURE VALIDITY

A signature is not acceptable if it contains one or more of the irregularities or omissions listed below. The codes used to mark irregularities and omissions on petition sheets are shown to the left of the descriptions.

- NC No city or township by that name in the county.
- IC Village or “unincorporated place” listed instead of township of registration when village or “unincorporated place” is not contained within a single township.
- CO Signature crossed out prior to filing.
- OC Address outside of city or township.
- ND Signature not dated or incompletely dated.

- ED Signature dated before first date permitted under law.
- SDC Signature dated after circulator dated sheet.
- NA No street address or rural route number listed.
- IN Signature appears as follows: Mrs. Smith, Mr. Smith, John, Jane.
- MC Miscellaneous identification problem.

ACCEPTABLE SIGNATURE IRREGULARITIES

The following irregularities do not affect the validity of petition signatures:

- Signature appears as follows: J. Smith; J.B. Smith; Mrs. J. Brown; Mrs. J.B. Brown; Mrs. John Brown.
- Illegible signature.
- Any of the following: signer prints name in entry provided for signature; signer fails to print name in entry provided for printed name; signer enters his or her cursive signature in entry provided for printed name. (Note: a signature is not acceptable if signer prints name in entry provided for printed name -- and fails to enter his or her signature in the signature entry.)
- Signer fails to enter his or her Zip Code or enters an incorrect Zip Code.
- Ditto marks.
- No mark to indicate whether the jurisdiction of registration is a “city” or a “township.” (Note: signature is acceptable regardless of whether (1) there is only one city or township by that name in the county listed in the heading or (2) there is both a city and a township by that name in the county listed in the heading.)
- Both the “city” box and the “township” box are marked. (Note: signature is acceptable regardless of whether (1) there is only one city or township by that name in the county listed in the heading or (2) there is both a city and a township by that name in the county listed in the heading.)
- Signer enters the community name appearing in his or her mailing address for his or her city or township of registration. (For example, a signature is acceptable if (1) the signer enters “East Lansing” on the petition (2) the signer is, in fact, registered to vote in Meridian Township and (3) the signer has an “East Lansing” mailing address.) The validity of a signature accompanied by a community name which appears in the signer’s mailing address is not affected by a city/township check off box error. This remains true if the community name appearing in the signer’s mailing address is shared by both a city and a township in the county.

- Signer lists village or “unincorporated place” instead of township of registration when village or “unincorporated place” is contained within a single township.

ATTENTION TO DETAIL ADVISED

Michigan contains 83 counties, 272 cities, 1,242 townships and 261 villages. Contained within Michigan’s townships are numerous “unincorporated places” which bear separate, unique names. Additionally, all of the state is served by post offices with names that in many cases do not correspond to the names of the cities, townships and villages they serve. Circulators using the “countywide” petition form are advised of the following:

CITIES AND TOWNSHIPS: All registered voters in Michigan are registered in a single city or township within the state. Because many cities and townships share the same name, it is important that the place of registration listed by each signer on the petition be clearly identified as a “city” or a “township.” For example, in Shiawassee County there is a City of Owosso and a Township of Owosso.

It is emphasized that if a registered voter signs a petition sheet that lists -- in its heading -- the wrong county of registration, the signature is invalid. For example, if a voter registered in the City of Owosso signs a sheet which lists any county other than Shiawassee County in its heading, the signature is invalid.

A number of cities in the state overlap county boundary lines. (No townships overlap county boundaries.) When obtaining a signature from a voter who is registered in a city that crosses county boundaries, make sure that the voter signs a sheet which properly lists – in its heading – the signer’s county of registration.

VILLAGES: Villages are Michigan’s smallest units of government. Some villages are wholly contained within a single township; others cross township boundaries. (Villages are not contained within nor do they cross into cities.)

A village resident who signs a “countywide” petition must list his or her township of registration. Further, the signer must be registered to vote in the township. A signature affixed to the petition by a village resident will be found invalid if the person is not registered at the township level.

If an error is made and the signer lists the name of a village for his or her township of registration, the signature will be accepted if the village is wholly contained within a single township. As noted above, the signer must be registered at the township level. A signature will be found invalid if the signer lists for his or her township of registration the name of a village that crosses township boundaries.

UNINCORPORATED PLACES: Michigan contains a number of unincorporated places that do not qualify as units of government as do cities, townships and villages. Some unincorporated places are wholly contained within a single township; others cross township boundaries. (Unincorporated places are not contained within nor do they cross into cities. Exceptions may be found.) Michigan residents who live in unincorporated places register to vote with their

township clerk.

A resident of an unincorporated place who wishes to sign a “countywide” petition form must list his or her township of registration. Further, the signer must be registered to vote in the township. If an error is made and a signer lists the name of an unincorporated place for his or her township of registration, the signature will be accepted if the unincorporated place is wholly contained within a single township. A signature will be found invalid if the signer lists for his or her township of registration the name of an unincorporated place that crosses township boundaries.

POST OFFICES AND ZIP CODES: All post offices are referred to by name and serve delivery areas of varying sizes. Each delivery area is assigned a Zip Code. In some cases, the name of a person’s post office will correspond to the name of the person’s city or township of residence. In other cases, especially in sparsely populated areas, the name of the person’s post office will not correspond to the name of the person’s city or township of residence. Thus, a person’s mailing address may or may not correspond to the name of the city or township where the person is registered to vote. For example, East Lansing residents are registered to vote in the City of East Lansing and have an East Lansing mailing address. However, persons registered to vote in Genesee Township, Richfield Township and Vienna Township in Genesee County have a Mt. Morris mailing address.

The signature of a signer who lists the name of his or her post office for his or her city or township of registration is acceptable. For example, if a voter registered in Genesee Township, Genesee County lists Mt. Morris (the name of the voter’s post office) for his or her township of registration, the signature will not be rejected for the error.

IMPORTANT

The information in this brochure is offered as a summary of the provisions which govern the validity of petition signatures; it is not a complete interpretation of the governing laws. Questions may be addressed to:

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P.O. Box 20126
Lansing, Michigan 48901-0726
Telephone: (517) 373-2540
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Authority granted under PA 116 of 1954
ED-105 (6/2003)
10,000 printed; \$1,723.00/\$ 0.17 ea.